

this is
about
more
than
who we
fuck

(and who we don't)

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(TAKE #2)

to talk" line with my friends. and as much as i'm into fighting normative expectations in my relationships, i just let time pass and don't bring it up. we don't see each other often enough for me to feel like i need to list all my emotions from the past week. i usually can't stay mad at someone for more than two days and you tend to say sorry when you're late. you've got a lot on your mind these days.

i'm writing this to hold you more accountable. to bring out all the skeletons and put them on the table and say look that's where a part of me died. and this is where another part of me figured out new ways to live. this is our history and i want you to honor that. i'll let you choose what that means, but i've got to lay it all out. in the end, maybe i'm more like bukowski than his cat. and there aren't any photographers around, but i'm bringing out this cat anyways. maybe it'll do us both some good.

We said before that this zine was born partly out of our desire for more writing to be out there about the place of personal relationships in the struggle (against authority, oppression, domination, and all the bullshit). I think the same holds true this time around. We're still fighting against all the things we've been taught about relationships, and we're still figuring out how to have radically different kinds of relationships than those we were taught to desire, and still figuring out how to bring politics into our relationships and relationships into our politics, and this zine is just a few people writing about that fight.

Please email us with thoughts, comments, etc.
morethanfckng@gmail.com

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and maybe it wasn't a good idea to write this story. lots of things i've said are things we haven't talked much about together. i'm not sure if it's because i never had the guts, never felt it was necessary, or never had the time. probably some combination of all three. sometimes these days it feels like you're super far away from me. even if we're in the same room. and i could get all sappy and say things change, people grow apart. they do. but that's not the point.

maybe i'm writing this because i want to force us to have a conversation about where i'm wrong. about that night we never talk about. except i'm not sure i have much to say about it anymore. i was sad for awhile. angry for another while and now its far enough in the past that i can laugh about how naive i was. laugh about how much my mind has changed where relationships and sex are concerned.

maybe i'm writing this because you always said you'd leave town and this was supposed to be an obituary. you did leave for a month, but when i went to your hometown with the intention of dragging you back to the city where we met, you beat me to the punch. left on the next flight out of town. almost didn't wait for me to arrive.

maybe i'm writing this because you've stopped returning my calls.

there have been times when i had things i wanted to say to you. accusations, things i wanted to "call you out" for. and i tend not to bring it up. there is no blueprint for the "what does this relationship mean to you" conversation with someone you aren't sleeping with. no one taught me how to pull out the "we need

it was february and it was so cold in our apartment that i could see my breath in the living room. we watched a movie together one night and i can't remember which one it was, but it must have been bleak because it sucked all the optimism out of me. i tried to go to bed, but i couldn't breathe. i couldn't talk. i could only sob and shakily gulp air in through the tears. alone in my room for half an hour, no one else existed and i was the only person in the world and it was awful.

i couldn't make it stop so i walked down the hall to your room and knocked on the door. you let me crawl into your bed, put your arm around me and i cried until i passed out because i didn't want to kiss you anymore. the only somersaults my brain did involved the end of the world.

this story isn't really about rejection. it's about what happens after. or about what doesn't have to happen after. and i wish it weren't so painful to dig up these dregs, but it's too late now, so i have to figure out an ending for a story without one.

maybe this story is more about vulnerability.

i moved out of that house more than a year ago. and you moved up the hill. far away. i hate signing emails with "love" and not telling someone i love them face to face, but we did that for a long time. we stopped recently. i was probably leaving your house after dinner some night and you hugged me and said "i love you" and i said it back. or maybe i said it and you replied. i don't remember much about it. now you'll send me texts that say "i love you" when you're drunk, and sometimes when you're not.

Manipulative Friend

by anonymous

I was a big weirdo in elementary school. Not necessarily a weirdo "in essence" but more in relation to other kids. I wasn't graceful enough to play with the girls, or tough enough to play with the guys. I remember in grade one I had one friend, but she was in another class. We would find each other at recess and be weirdos together for those 30 minutes and when the bell rang we'd go back to our quiet, lonely lives. One day this kid in my class sat me down to tell me some vital information: "I just wanted to let you know - no one in our class likes you. Don't worry, I like you, but I'm pretty sure I'm the only one." Maybe it was the strangely ambiguous way he broke the news that made it stick with me all of these years, or maybe I'm haunted by the idea that everyone around me secretly doesn't like me.

I'm still a big weirdo, probably more so than when I was a kid. But I guess now I have some friends. A while ago I told one of my closest friends that I had a crush on her. I'd been thinking about doing it for a few weeks prior. It seemed like a good idea – she was (is) an amazing person. We were hanging out all of the time, having a great time, and it had been that way for a long time. It felt like she needed me, and I knew I needed her.

Looking back on it, telling her I had a crush on her was a way to *escalate* our relationship. I had this idea of romantic relationships as this way to guarantee that someone would always be there for you - you'd always have someone to hang out with, someone would always take care of you when you're sick, etc. I really wanted that. I still really want that. But in retrospect, I seriously doubt that my attraction to her was just that – attraction, and more an

expression of my need for her to be there for me. It was a way to see if she gave a shit, and ask her to give more. That was the most coercive, manipulative thing I've ever done in my life. She responded by taking a huge step back. We didn't talk for a whole summer. Seeing her around was unbearable. I felt like I lost a huge part of my support network. I was working part time and spent most of the rest of my time in my room.

At the end of the summer she called me to ask if I wanted to talk about stuff. We met at a picnic table in a park. She told me that she felt like I'd been emotionally dependent on her. She said that she strives to create relationships where each person chooses freely to meet the needs of the other, instead of feeling obligated or coerced. Then it was my turn. She said it would be better to lay everything out on the table and be as honest as possible, otherwise it would be hard to move forward. First I apologized for making her feel shitty, but then I found it difficult to be honest about my own feelings, because I felt like making myself vulnerable would perpetuate this dynamic of "emotional dependency" that she had named. I didn't want her to suddenly feel like she had to support me, right after she told me that she couldn't. It became clear to me that my choice to tell her I had a crush on her was merely a crystallization of a larger dynamic that had been ruling our relationship for a long time. I was angry at myself for not figuring that out, and I was angry at her for not telling me sooner.

Our relationship is better now. I see her fairly often, and it feels good. Sometimes she tells me about stuff in her life that's bothering her, and I sometimes I tell her about stuff in my life that's bothering me. It's not the same as it was before the

stopped trying to hold my hand as we walked around together, when you stopped sitting right against me in the hall and when you stopped putting your arm around me when we watched movies, i kept my mouth shut and appreciated the needed distance. for awhile. i had realized that maybe the physical affection could exist without the sexual tension. it was something you had been trying to show me all along, it just had taken me awhile to see it.

we moved in together and you left town the next day. you were gone for four months. i put up posters in the living room, smoked on the back porch and watched the fireworks. i started dating a couple of people, dressed up as an airplane for a demo that was supposed to be about kites and went to the capital. i drove to the border and then walked across it. i rode your bike around with the seat up too high and the handlebars down too low and thought i was going to die. and then i got into an accident on my bike and, by the time you came back to town, i had crutches and a bus pass and our apartment was starting to feel too far away from everywhere else i wanted to be.

when you got back, we made up for the physical distance between us by arguing a lot. i had all these ideas in my head about non-monogamy and violence that i wanted to share (in separate conversations). and arguing is my way of showing affection. and then, slowly, slowly, i started testing the waters of physical affection with you. you let me move at my own pace this time around. the tension was still there, these actions were demons for me, but i could fight harder this time.

you were still around. and then we moved in together.

originally, i had this plan up my sleeve to leave town for a year. to get so far away from you that i'd forget that night we slept too close together. i'd forget that scene in the library where my face turned red and i couldn't meet your eyes. i'd forget the weeks after and how hard it was to not pick up the phone.

but my mother always tells me i have a photographic memory and in this case she was right. i couldn't forget and my plan to move away failed. the end of my lease was fast approaching and my landlady was kicking me to the curb. i asked you if i could move in with you.

i'm not sure how i got to the point of wanting to move in with you. i think it had a lot to do with your refusal to let me push you away. your steadfast willingness to keep in touch let me know that you didn't hate my guts for violating some sacred law of friendship (don't fall for your friends or bad things will happen) and also that you weren't willing to let me exact my perfected revenge-through-silence response.

also, i think i had to prove to myself that i could tell people i was into them, tell people i wanted something about my relationship with them to change, and hear them say "no" and still keep that relationship going.

some things had changed though. subtly. and i didn't say anything because i was sure that it was my fault and i was maxed out in the honesty department where our relationship was concerned. so when you

summer - I don't think it ever will be, and that's probably a good thing.

I've learned some good things from this whole thing – how its bad to manipulate folks into meeting your needs, but I also think it did some damage. Following that conversation, I began to fear that I was perpetuating this dynamic in other relationships. I started doubting that other friends sincerely wanted to spend time with me. In the long run, this whole experience has made it difficult for me to ask for support. Now it feels like asking for support from anyone is always a burden. I find myself constantly apologizing whenever I talk about anything negative. I've learned to keep most things to myself. I especially feel like I can't really talk about being sad in general when there isn't a concrete event to trace it back to. Most of my friends are either really busy, have fucked up and intense shit going on in their lives, or both. Talking about my unexplainable depression feels so petty in comparison to what's going on with them, so most of the time I don't even try. Also, since most folks seem to have so little time to spare and they're dealing with their own shit, I feel like I need to be in good shape to hang out with them, because people generally want to hang out with folks who make them feel good. If I don't make them feel good, they might not "freely choose" to spend time with me. I feel much more isolated than I did before this happened. I want to know how to trust that folks around me give a shit. I don't want to feel like I'm twisting someone's arm to get them to support me. I feel like the answer is just to trust that the folks who say they care actually do. But for some reason it's not that easy for me. Maybe it's that dude from grade one haunting me. This is all stuff with which I'm still struggling.

Bromance: A Love Story

by Caytee

I can remember the exact moment I fell in love with you. It must have been autumn, because you were wearing some silly combination of sweaters and flannel under an even sillier fluorescent yellow windbreaker. You were biking away, even though it was probably only a hundred metres to the building you were headed to. You insisted on biking even the shortest distances across campus. I think it made you anxious to be too far from where you had parked your bike. I even remember you telling me that you used to lock it to a tree outside of your physics classroom so that you could see it out the window. I don't think it was out of a fear of theft, but simply affection and a desire for closeness. So you were biking away on your well-loved bike, in your silly sweaters, your fashionably ill-fitting pants, your awkward shins and socks and beat-up shoes, your huge river of hair flowing out of the bottom of your snowboarding helmet, and I fell in love with you. My heart just welled up and spilled right over.

Maybe falling in love isn't really the right turn of phrase...or maybe it needs some dissecting. It wasn't as if I had recently met you and was realizing that you were someone I really wanted to be a part of my life. We had already gotten past that point. It was definitely not the first time I had ever experienced feelings of love for you. It was just the first time I had felt that very physical and tangible feeling for you, that gush coming out of my heart, and it felt a lot like falling...or soaring, or flying, or exploding or something. So maybe I understand "falling in love" to mean the first time you feel that crazy feeling. But it doesn't imply that you'll never feel it again. Or that you inevitably will feel it again. Or that this feeling

"i'm into you" is a pretty vague phrase, but you knew what i meant. i wanted the whole thing. the whole monogamous hog. and looking back i can tell myself that it was just about the sex but the way i thought about relationships at the time meant that "i'm into you" translated into a lot more than sex.

by that point, i knew what you were going to say, but had to hear you say it out loud.

and in my head, that was a big deal, some sort of turning point. and when you looked at me and said 'i really appreciate you as a friend' or some shit like that (and it's only shit because i felt shitty not because what you said was shitty) something in my stomach turned and i tried to not leave the room right away, but plotted my exit for awhile and then ducked out. and stopped calling you. i needed some space. i had been taught that 'rejection' was supposed to hurt.

i had been taught that when two people wanted different things from their relationship, and i'm not just talking about romantic ones, that relationship had to end or be eternally awful. and i didn't want to be awful to you so i stopped returning your phone calls because it seemed nicer than anything else i had to say.

but you just kept calling.

i started sleeping with someone you hated. and maybe it was partly out of spite, although i tried not to think about that. and when that relationship ended with me in tears, confused and angry, mostly at myself, you were still around.

get on the train and go home for the winter break. the night before you left we watched a movie together and you asked if i wanted to crash at your place. nothing new. except that night when i got the covers together to sleep on the couch, you said we should just sleep in the same bed. no big deal.

you had told me that you were affectionate with everyone and i had a lot of evidence to back that up. the problem was that i wasn't affectionate with everyone so my brain did a series of somersaults to cope that night. i didn't sleep very much. our bodies were too close together and all the boundaries i had set up in my head about what it meant to be friends and what it meant to be "more than that" were collapsing. and instead of turning off my brain and falling asleep, i lay awake thinking about how badly i wanted to kiss you.

you woke up in the morning and left town. and i set about judging what was going on between us by the length of our emails. i got us in the habit of writing back and forth. a lot. and at some point i got bold and dared to write 'i miss you' at the bottom of a letter and you responded by formalizing your salutation and sign-off. 'dear, you. sincerely, me'.

what else did you do? you called me an anarchist and a defeatist. you taunted me. you came back to town and invited me for more coffee.

i caved and told you i was into you. i held my breath until the entire library was listening and the blood was pounding in my ears and then i squeaked out a few words and went back to holding my breath.

sets this particular love above all the rest. Or that you want to spend the rest of your life feeling that exact thing for that exact person and no one else.

When we first met I thought you were a rock star. I tell you that over and over, but I can never explain properly what I mean by it. You just seemed to exist on this faraway, untouchable plane that mere mortals like me could never reach or understand. You were elusive, mysterious, outrageous, absurd. Everything you did was unexpected. You were sure of yourself, sure of what you liked and disliked, sure of what you wanted. I think the elusiveness and untouchability of your character (or the caricature I created of you in my head) is very important in the unfolding of this story.

We met through a roommate of yours with whom I was performing some awkward courting ritual, which mostly involved me coming to your house, playing guitar and singing lots of songs to your roommates. You told me I sounded like a singer we both admire, so I learned one of her songs just so I could sing it for you. You were delighted, and I was delighted at your delight.

I got to see a lot of you over the next few months. I was dating your roommate, and hanging out at your house quite a bit. We studied in the same library on campus. We would take coffee breaks together. I think this is where our relationship became forever entwined with caffeine, until the friendship itself took on an addictive, drug-like quality. It had a high, a buzz; and in it's absence, a craving.

We took to meeting at a coffee shop on campus twice weekly. At first, we both just happened to be there coincidentally over and over. Then, it became an unspoken expectation that the other would be there at the usual time. If one of us failed to

show, heart-crushing disappointment would follow. The expectation then became explicit, with desperate text-messages being sent if either of us was late or absent. I would revel in the stale-coffee smell that lingered on my clothes and your mischievous grin that lingered in my mind for the rest of the day.

Spring came, and though I was no longer dating your roommate, I was still spending time at your house. We spent many hours cramming next to each other in the library, taking plenty of coffee breaks, and sharing stolen sweets from the cafeteria. I was so happy to get to know you, and even if I couldn't quite take you down off your "rock star" pedestal, you at least seemed a little closer to human the more you revealed yourself to me.

Summer. Most of our friends left town and we stuck around. I was subletting a friend's place for 4 months, and she just so happened to leave behind an amazing stove-top espresso maker (not a crappy moka pot, a real espresso maker that could steam milk). So for the next month, you would come over every single afternoon, and we would drink lattes on my back porch. I would leave my stupid dishwashing job, get home, call and invite you over. We would shoot the shit. Life, love, sex, drugs, rock and roll, the crushes, the queers, the cool kids. Caffeine, secrets, and mutual love pulled us closer and closer. When your class ended, you took off for the rest of the summer. Every time I tasted coffee for the next month, I would look around expecting to see you there beside me, and feel a pang in my heart at your absence.

As we grew closer and closer, there were many points at which I wondered whether any of my attraction towards you was sexual. Every time we had a conversation about sex it ended with us

crossed eyes that got hit by a car and broke its back and was still kickin around so that bukowski could pull him out when the photographers took out their cameras and hold him in the air and say 'look'. and when the photographers just looked confused he would babble about how he and the cat, they had a lot in common and they had both been through some shit and him and the cat, they would keep going through shit cause life is shit.

you told me you thought i was hardcore like that cat. i was sceptical.

you'd hold my hand when we were walking around. and sit so close to me on the floor in that old hallway. and hug me goodbye. i wasn't used to people touching me. other folks i was close to at the time would make fun of me for it. 'oh you flinch when i hug you.' i guess my folks aren't what you'd call touchy feely. and in school, the kinds of physical contact i got from other people mostly involved ass grabbing and unwanted stares.

you had a girlfriend. years of monogamy and going strong, i thought. you didn't open up about many hard things. you tended to keep it close until everything was boiling over.

you had a girlfriend so if i ever got the idea that you were hitting on me, i'd just chalk it up to my own anxiety. you couldn't be hitting on me, you had a girlfriend. end of story.

and then she came to town and you two broke up.

and then the semester ended and you were going to

Love Letters

by anonymous

we sent poems back and forth.

we wrote a paper together for a really hard class and then started sending poems back and forth because i found out that adrienne rich wrote poetry.

and maybe this time, when i'm writing this love story it will be too much a literal transcription of emails sent years ago. they're all still in my inbox and i'm gonna cheat and read as i write. tell the story both as i remember it and as the internet says it happened. although inevitably the internet cuts out and maybe the silences will say more than the pages full of words. this approach seems appropriate given some of the things we talk about. like the inconsistency of memory and the importance of history. so i'll read between the lines of the emails, conjure up emotions three years dead and weave in the kid i am today. the kid you are today. and when i say that, i mean this is fiction through and through.

you know i love you, right? it took me a long time to figure out what that meant to me though.

you taught me how to like coffee. i never drank coffee before i met you. never liked the taste. i still don't, but i learned what 'good' coffee is supposed to taste like. and though it's always your opinion, you taught me like it was objective. that is just what good coffee is.

you sent me a poem by charles bukowski once. the one about his cat. the cat with no tail and a limp and

laughing and saying "we should never have sex!" It became clear that we had different ideas about what we liked and didn't, and that we probably wouldn't have much fun sleeping with each other. Our relationship was almost devoid of any physical affection, which was unusual for me. I found hugging you unsatisfactory. You pulled away too soon, and I was left grasping nothing, floundering in the constant elusiveness you presented me with. I assumed that physical affection just wasn't a way in which we understood one another.

That moment when I realized that I was in love you left me reeling. It seemed like that was the point where I really had to decide whether or not I was going to let myself become attracted to you sexually. I could see it happening. I could see it being tragic and painful, me being possessive and jealous, being the monster that love had turned me into in the past. But I could also see other possibilities. Scenarios where I maybe wanted to fuck you but came to terms with the fact that it was never going to happen, and just kept loving you anyways and being happy with the way things were. Scenarios where I didn't have to go down that road at all and could just love you the way I loved you without needing to have sex to justify those "romantic" feelings. Scenarios where maybe we did fuck, but nothing really changed all that much. Because you were you, wild and free, and I could never really have you, especially not just by having sex with you. And I didn't want to have you! I didn't want to tame you or break you. I loved you because I couldn't have you, because no one could, because you were elusive and intangible, impossible to pin down, free and whole and untouchable.

I acknowledge the extreme fucked-upedness of how I could have thought about sex as a way of

having someone, a way of possessing them or taming them...but I'm going to go ahead and blame most of that on being raised in a society that makes sex into a possessive act, and love into a possessive feeling. For the past few years I've been working real hard on finding ways of loving and fucking people without possessing them. I think my love for you taught me a valuable lesson. I think it was the first time I ever loved someone in that crazy, chest-exploding kind of way where it didn't come with all this possessive baggage. I think loving you was what really showed me that kind of love was possible. How to love whole, free people, and not just the little parts of them they allow you to have. Because you didn't allow me to have any of you, and made me realize that wasn't what I wanted.

sexually intensive way and it was used by the infiltrator as an opportunity to gather more information that could be used against us.

Encrypted communications is one part of how we can defend ourselves from surveillance. Of course, this doesn't deal with the more fundamental problem of infiltrators or informants in our communities. As we say in the ATS workshops, you can't encrypt a snitch! It is a difficult problem that doesn't have easy solutions, but one positive approach that I heard coming out of the experiences of people who dealt with the infiltrators in southern Ontario is to pay attention to how well we know the people that we struggle with. If we don't know them well, this is a sign that we should communicate with them more about their life, their motivations, and their priorities. Even if there are no infiltrators or informants, this kind of communication can still be positive for our relationships and help build trust.

Through email, and writing in general, I can be more honest with myself and others by having more time to reflect on what I want to say, and challenging myself to be more vulnerable when I share parts of myself with another person. Through encrypted email I can be open and vulnerable with the people I care about, without also making all of us more vulnerable to state surveillance and repression. This is especially important when I'm communicating with *compañer@s* - the friends, lovers, and other important people in my life with whom I share revolutionary commitments that threaten the police and the system they defend.

of central organizers on the morning of the largest day of protest. These organizers faced conspiracy charges, imprisonment, and heavy conditions including non-association with many people, and house arrest. Thousands of other people involved in the mobilization against the G20 also faced state repression to an extent that many of us hadn't experienced before.

Difficult situations are important times for learning, and in this case one of the things we learned about was our vulnerabilities to state surveillance, and how this is used against us for repression and counterinsurgency. I started learning a lot about how to encrypt email and other computer-based forms of communication, and doing workshops to share this knowledge with other people. This became a project called Anarchist Tech Support as we worked to spread a network of encrypted communication among anarchists and our allies. We want to defend ourselves, the people we care about, and our broader communities against the harm that can be done to us as a result of state surveillance.

As we talked to people in the workshops, and learned more about the specifics of the recent cases of infiltration, it became clear that state surveillance is not just about gathering evidence of supposedly illegal activities that can then be used in court. The police actively try to disrupt our organizing, as well as the relationships and communities that make that organizing possible. Reportedly, one of the largest sets of notes gathered by one infiltrator in southern Ontario was on gossip, relationships, and interpersonal dynamics at a queer anarchist convergence. This was a time when anarchists from many places were coming together in a socially and

Untitled
by Olivia

Is blood supplied slowly
Using forcible bodies
If power passes slowly
Between two people
You can force it

Open Relationships, Encrypted Emails

by Boskote

When I'm getting to know someone that I really like, I often open up to that person by sending them long emails. We hang out and have lots of interesting conversation, and when we part ways those conversations continue in my head. I want to share all of the things I'm thinking, so when I arrive home I start writing them an email. Usually at this point the late night is turning into the early morning, but I'm kept wide awake with the excitement of sharing with this new person, and often learning things about myself in the process.

I don't think this is specifically about email. Sometimes I write letters. I have also kept journals that are partially written for someone I care about. For a lot of my life I have been able to be more open through text than I can be in person. I'm trying to change that now, but it's still often true. It could be because in my family growing up we never talked very directly about how we felt, so verbal sharing of this kind is still something I'm learning. Having an open, honest conversation with someone you care about can be scary! Also, I'm just slow at things in general, so writing gives me the time to reflect and figure out how to articulate new and difficult things in my life.

One of the most important parts of open relationships for me has been that through more intentional communication about desires and expectations, the usual categories that relationships are assumed to fall into can themselves be opened up. So its not just that I'm open to having more than one partner, but that I'm open to redefining what is meant by the assumed categories such as "partner", "friend", "roommate", and figuring out new ways of

relating that fit our specific situations and desires rather than fitting our relationships into the categories that we've been taught. In particular I have thought a lot about the ways that shared commitments to struggles against oppression are a defining feature of some of my important relationships. I want to validate and encourage feelings of love and support that are based as much on shared commitments as they are on intimacy or other forms of closeness.

Our ideas about relationships are defined in part by the language that we have to describe them. My first language is English, but I have learned Spanish, and one word I really like from that language is *compañer@*. I use the @ sign because the word can be either masculine with an "o" or feminine with an "a" and I don't want to use either one. Literally translated into English, it means something like companion or comrade, though is different than either of these because it can be used to refer to mixtures of personal and political connection and trust. This word has resonated with me because it can be used to describe relationships that mix mutually reinforcing feelings of care and affection with shared commitments to revolutionary transformation. This is a way I feel about many important people in my life, and having words to describe it has been a small part of the process of figuring that out.

In my case, most of these *compañer@s* are anarchists, and for many us the Summer of 2010 was a significant time. There was a large mobilization against the G20 summit in Toronto that anarchists had a major role in organizing. While this mobilization was going on, police infiltrated communities in southern Ontario and used their intensive surveillance as a basis for targeted arrests